

10 things you should know about R/GA

Introduction: a brief history of advertising

Let's say you get in a time machine, set it for 1960, and step out on Madison Avenue wearing a grey suit and one of those skinny ties. Mass media is exploding, redefining the way people relate to culture. And some extremely smart advertising people are trying to figure out how to help clients sell products in this brave new world. Everyone smokes. Martinis are flowing.

One thing these admen do is invent the idea of a brand— all the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions people have of a company. The theory is that if you create the right associations, products will fly off shelves.

The creatives at these agencies are teams of art directors and copywriters. They build brands by blasting 30-second television commercials at captive audiences. Since their message interrupts what people are watching, they make their ads entertaining. TV is king, and for their world this all makes perfect sense.

Agencies grow into huge corporations. The process of writing, selling, and creating the 30-second spot is perfected and becomes etched into their DNA. Many talented people have whole careers making 30-second spots, then retire to Florida where they watch TV all day. A long time passes like this.

Then one day the Internet comes along and changes everything.

How do agencies react? At first they don't. After decades of stasis, it's hard to adapt. And since technology is involved, they don't have the right skills. Eventually they decide that they don't need to change all that much, and that interactive should simply be a way of "extending" their brand narratives. So they hire a few web guys to make a site that looks like the print ad that looks like the spot. They call this "integration."

Except that it doesn't work. It is a solution based on what is easy for traditional agencies to produce, not on reality. Because by now the digital realm has completely reshaped how people connect with one another, their relationship with the media, and how they see products and brands, just as mass media did years ago. The TV era turns out to have been a preamble to the digital age.

And that is where R/GA comes in. What we are interested in doing is going back to the fundamental question of marketing—how can we help our clients sell more products in the world as it exists today and is likely to exist in the future?

The answers are still evolving, but a few things are clear. A brand is much bigger than a story. How customers interact with you is as important as what you tell them.

And consumers are behaving differently and have different expectations than they had in 1960.

Another thing we know that is absolutely true—you'll need a different group of people at the table, a fresh way of looking at creativity, and a new agency model if you want to devise solutions that make sense for today's all-new brave new world.

1/

The consumer

rules
our
world

**We work by asking “What do consumers want now?”
and then following wherever the answer leads.
That might mean anything from building an e-commerce site,
to telling a story, to inventing something completely new.**

2/

**we have impossibly
high standards**

**Over 30 years, through many cycles and changes,
one thing has remained constant—
an unflinching commitment to the highest levels of craft.**

3/

**Technology is
creative**

We practice technology as a creative discipline. Truly meaningful digital work only can happen when creative technologists are involved in every step of the process. It can't be outsourced or left until the end.

4/

The **big idea** is changing

We're looking beyond the traditional "big campaign idea" for breakthrough ideas rooted in digital. Taglines and funny little films have a role to play—they just aren't big enough to drive our work.

5/

**We make
brands
useful**

**Creating fond associations with your consumers is not enough.
We're focused on building community and making
the brand something they can use and benefit from every day.**

6/

We've got

aptitude

Digital requires much broader creative skills than traditional advertising, from rigorous pure interactive thinking to brand storytelling. That's why we've built a creative team with the industry's widest range of expertise.

7/

We're more than > marketers

Connecting consumers with brands can mean blurring the lines between advertising, product and software development, public relations, and other areas. We're proud to be one of the industry's biggest blurrers.

GO**AHEAD****TOUCH****OUR****INTERFACE**

It's a fact of digital life—in front of every story, community, and piece of information is an interface. It's the place where consumers touch your brand. Creating usable and intuitive interfaces is an essential part of all our work.

9/

**We're redefining
video production
production
again**

The average 30-second spot costs tens of thousands of dollars a second to produce. With right-sized teams and efficient digital production, we can achieve the same quality, and make much more content, without obscene budgets.

10/

And we're built for change...

It's inevitable. As technology advances, consumer behavior will continue to evolve, and so will our approach. That's why we embody a highly flexible new agency model, centered on the ever-changing interplay of strategy, creative, and technology.

Founded in 1977 as a production company, R/GA is one of the world's most awarded full-service digital agencies.

Little Red Books is a series of monographs covering topics that are important to us—mainly the evolution of digital communications, changes in consumer culture, and what it all means for those of us who are trying to be better marketers.

10 things you should know about R/GA is the first in that series.

■ R/GA